

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 SPC-01 NSC-07 NSCE-00

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 PRS-01 SAM-01 EB-03

DODE-00 ACDA-10 DRC-01 /063 W

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R 070930Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6678

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD VIA POUCH

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 3252

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, US

SUBJECT: ATMOSPHERICS OF CALL ON BREZHNEV

1. SUMMARY: DURING MY MARCH 5 INITIAL CALL ON BREZHNEV, HE TOUCHED ON A NUMBER OF PERSONAL AND SOVIET INTERNAL MATTERS WHICH ARE OF INTEREST FOR THE LIGHT THEY SHED ON BREZHNEV THE MAN. THIS MESSAGE ALSO COVERS ATMOSPHERICS AND SECONDARY MATTERS NOT REPORTED ELSEWHERE, AS WELL AS A DESCRIPTION OF SOVIET MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE CALL. END SUMMARY.

2. BREZHNEV'S KREMLIN OFFICE IS ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF A BUILDING NEAR THE NIKOL'SKAYA TOWER, REACHED BY A LONG CORRIDOR WHICH FRONTS ON THE INNER-COURTYARD OF THE BUILDING. MILITARY AIDE-DE-CAMP SOKOLOV ESCORTED ME TO THE ANTEROOM, MANNED BY SINGLE STAFF AIDE AT A CONSOLE OF ELECTRONIC SWITCHES. I WAS SHOWN IN IMMEDIATELY AT 11:00 SHARP. PHOTOGRAPHERS WERE ALREADY IN THE ROOM WITH BREZHNEV, AND THEY REMAINED FOR THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OR SO OF OUR CONVERSATION. THE ROOM TEMPERATURE WAS ABOUT 65 DEGREES OR LESS, DESPITE THE FACT IT WAS NOT EXCEPTIONALLY COLD OUTSIDE. BREZHNEV EXPLAINED THAT IT HAD BEEN LENIN'S CUSTOM TO HOLD POLITBURO MEETINGS IN THE KREMLIN, AND THIS CUSTOM CONTINUED.

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THIS WAS WHY HE HAD AN OFFICE IN THE KREMLIN AS WELL AS THE

CENTRAL COMMITTEE BUILDING. HE PROMISED TO SHOW ME THE POLITBURO MEETING ROOM NEXT DOOR, BUT DIDN'T FOLLOW THROUGH. BREZHNEV SAID IT WAS THE CUSTOM OF THE POLITBURO TO GATHER INFORMALLY IN HIS OFFICE (KNOWN AS THE "NUT ROOM" BECAUSE OF THE NUT-COLORED WOOD PANELLING), THEN TO MOVE TO THE POLITBURO ROOM FOR THE FORMAL MEETING.

3. BREZHNEV RECALLED HIS DAYS AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET, WHEN HE RECEIVED AMBASSADORS PRESENTING THEIR CREDENTIALS. HE REMARKED THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE TWO KINDS OF AMBASSADORS -- THOSE WHO ARE ALWAYS SEEING PEOPLE, ASKING QUESTIONS, GETTING ABOUT, AND THOSE WHO SIT AND DO NOTHING. I TOLD HIM I EXPECTED TO BE AN ACTIVIST, WHICH PROMPTED HIM TO QUOTE THE RUSSIAN PROVERB EQUIVALENT TO "A ROLLING STONE GATHERS NO MOSS." AT A LATER POINT IN THE CONVERSATION, BREZHNEV REGISTERED HIS INTEREST IN SOVIET EM-BASSIES ABROAD WHEN HE COMPLAINED THAT INFLATION WAS PUSHING UP COSTS AND SOVIET MISSIONS WERE CONSTANTLY ASKING FOR INCREASED FUNDING.

4. AT MY REQUEST, BREZHNEV SHOWED ME HIS CIGARETTE CASE WITH BUILT-IN TIME LOCK, BUT HE HAD TO GO THROUGH HIS BRIEFCASE AND DIG AROUND IN HIS DESK TO FIND IT. HE SMOKED SEVERAL CIGARETTES FROM A BOX ON THE TABLE IN FRONT OF HIM. WHEN HE ASKED FOR TEA TO BE BROUGHT, HE REMINDED HIS AIDE TO BRING COOKIES TOO, BUT HE HIMSELF ATE NO SWEETS. WHEN I SHOWED HIM THE PEN HE HAD GIVEN ME IN THE U.S., HE IMMEDIATELY REACHED OVER ON HIS DESK AND SHOWED ME HIS PEN BEARING THE PRESIDENT'S AUTOGRAPH. HE ALSO EXPRESSED DELIGHT WITH SOME FELT-TIP PENS HE HAD PICKED UP IN THE U.S.

5. BREZHNEV STRESSED SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN THE FORTHCOMING SOVIET FIVE-YEAR PLAN. HE SAID THE USSR WOULD NOT BE DEPENDENT ON ANYBODY -- NOT EGYPT, IRAN, OR EVEN THE U.S. ON THE OTHER HAND, HIS ENTHUSIASM FOR LONG-TERM, LARGE-SCALE JOINT ECONOMIC PROJECTS WAS UNDIMINISHED. HE CLAIMED THAT ONE BENEFIT OF SUCH PROJECTS WOULD BE TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE U.S.

6. WHEN I MENTIONED OUR ALLIES AT ONE POINT, BREZHNEV SAID
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HE WONDERED HOW RELIABLE THEY WERE AND SUGGESTED WE MIGHT FIND IN THE LONG RUN THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS REALLY OUR BEST ALLY. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE IS A NEW BLOC OF NINE WITHIN THE NATO BLOC -- "A NEW HOUSE HAS BEEN BUILT INSIDE THE OLD HOUSE."

7. AT ONE POINT, BREZHNEV LAMENTED THE ALLEGED "ANTI-SOVIETISM" OF THE WESTERN PRESS AND ITS TENDENCY TO DISTORT SOVIET

REALITY. CITING A PARTICULARLY FLAGRANT EXAMPLE, HE RECALLED A RECENT STORY BY A MOSCOW-BASED NEWSMAN WHO WROTE ABOUT BREZHNEV'S LIFE-STYLE. THIS NEWSMAN HAD CLAIMED BREZHNEV LIVED IN LENIN HILLS, WHICH WAS NOT TRUE. HE WROTE THAT BREZHNEV HAD TWO DAUGHTERS, WHICH WAS FALSE -- IN FACT, HE HAD ONE DAUGHTER AND ONE SON. HE CLAIMED BREZHNEV OWNED A CERTAIN KIND OF CAR, WHILE IN FACT HE HAD NO SUCH CAR.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MOSCOW 03252

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8. DEVELOPING THE THEME OF OUTSIDE PERCEPTION OF THE USSR, BREZHNEV SAID IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR MORE ORDINARY PEOPLE TO SEE THE SOVIET UNION WITH THEIR OWN EYES. HE HAD INVITED FILM STAR CHUCK CONNORS, RECEIVED HIM WHEN HE CAME TO MOSCOW, AND MADE SURE HE SAW THE COUNTRY. CONNORS HAD GIVEN A PRESS CONFERENCE AT WHICH HE CHEWED OUT THE MOSCOW FOREIGN PRESS CORPS FOR LOOKING ONLY AT THE SEAMY SIDE OF LIFE, FAILING TO UNDERSTAND THE POSITIVE THINGS TAKING PLACE IN THE USSR. BREZHNEV HAD BEEN VERY PLEASED WHEN WORD OF THIS PRESS CONFERENCE GOT BACK TO HIM, SINCE IT WAS THE HONEST VIEW OF A NON-POLITICAL PERSON.

9. IN ENUMERATING THE AGREEMENTS REACHED OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS WITH THE UNITED STATES, BREZHNEV USED AN INTERESTING PARAPHRASE TO IDENTIFY THE PNW AGREEMENT. HE SAID "WE'VE AGREED ON THE NON-USE OF ATOMIC WEAPONS AGAINST EACH OTHER."

10. RECALLING MEDICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES WITH THE U.S., BREZHNEV SPOKE WARMLY AND GRATEFULLY OF THE HEART SURGERY
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PERFORMED BY AN AMERICAN SPECIALIST ON ACADEMY OF SCIENCES PRESIDENT KELDYSH. HE MUSED ABOUT THE DIFFICULTY IN MAKING A BREAKTHROUGH IN CANCER COMPARABLE TO WHAT MAN HAD LEARNED ABOUT HEART DISEASE, AND HE SAID THE EXTRA REVENUE TO THE GOVERNMENT PRODUCED BY A RECENT SUBBOTNIK HAD GONE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CANCER RESEARCH FACILITIES. U.S. SPECIALISTS WOULD BE WELCOME TO SEE THESE INSTITUTIONS.

11. HE ALSO EVINced AN INTEREST IN URBAN PROBLEMS, PRAISING THE ABILITY OF THE MOSCOW SUBWAY TO MOVE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE CITY. HE SAID IT WAS THE SOVIET GOAL TO PREVENT THE CITY FROM GETTING ANY LARGER, AND NOT TO ALLOW IT TO SPILL OVER BEYOND THE CIRCUMFERENTIAL HIGHWAY.

12. IN DISCUSSION OF MY INTEREST IN SEEING VARIOUS PARTS OF THE SOVIET UNION, BREZHNEV SHOWED SURPRISE WHEN I MENTIONED THAT RECENT CHANGES IN TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ON AMBASSADORS HAD MADE IT SOMEWHAT EASIER FOR ME TO DO SO. HE SEEMED GENUINELY UNAWARE OF THE PRACTICE OF RESTRICTING TRAVEL OF FOREIGN DIPLOMATS. WHEN I SAID I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO REMOVE ALL RESTRICTIONS ON MOVEMENT OF DIPLOMATS ON A RECIPROCAL BASIS, HE SAID HE WAS SURE SUCH A PROPOSAL WOULD BE BROUGHT TO HIS ATTENTION IF IT WERE PUT FORTH. HE SAID HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF ANY PROBLEMS WHICH DOBRYNIN HAD IN THE U.S., AND SINCE I PROBABLY WOULD NOT WISH TO SEE SPECIAL FACTORIES IN THE USSR WHICH MIGHT BE PROHIBITED, HE WAS CERTAIN THERE WOULD BE NO DIFFICULTIES FOR ME.

13. BREZHNEV ADMITTED HE ENJOYED DRIVING, PARTICULARLY THE NEW LINCOLN. HE HAD BEEN IN THE TANK CORPS WHEN HE WAS IN MILITARY SERVICE, AND A PREREQUISITE FOR DRIVING A TANK WAS A DRIVERS LICENSE. HE HAD HAD A LICENSE SINCE 1935. HE DRIVES NOW ONLY OUTSIDE THE CITY. WHEN I SAID I UNDERSTOOD HE LIKED TO DRIVE FAST, HE ADMITTED THIS WAS SO, BUT THAT HE WAS ALWAYS UNDER CONTROL AND HAD NOT YET HAD AN ACCIDENT.

14. ALTHOUGH BREZHNEV ACKNOWLEDGED HE HAD HAD A TOUCH OF FLU RECENTLY, HE LOOKED WELL AND VIGOROUS. HIS HANDS WERE STEADY AND HE SLURRED HIS WORDS NO MORE THAN NORMALLY.

15. MY MEETING WITH BREZHNEV WAS GIVEN FRONT-PAGE TREAT-

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MENT IN ALL CENTRAL DAILIES, AS IS CUSTOMARY WHEN HE RECEIVES
ANY FOREIGNER. THE MARCH 5 "VREMYA" TELEVISION NEWS CARRIED
THE TEXT OF THE TASS RELEASE AS THE LEAD ITEM AND SHOWED MORE
THAN A MINUTE'S FILMED COVERAGE OF THE MEETING.
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